Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A slot machine comprising:

a plurality of reels, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of different first discrete symbols and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete first symbols such that the first discrete symbols are thematically unified by the graphical element;

a processor operable to rotate the reels and stop the reels to place the first discrete symbols on the reels in visual association with a display area, and to award a base game payout responsive to an alignment of a plurality of first discrete symbols associated with a winning combination along a selected payline,

wherein at least one of said reels comprises a video reel and wherein said processor is operable ~~to~~, for said at least one of said reels, to move a selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element independent of player control to reveal a randomly determined outcome, and to determine an award corresponding to said randomly determined outcome, said award being related to a degree of said movement and being independent of any payline.

2.   (Cancelled).

3.   (Currently Amended) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein ~~wherein~~ said processor is operable to move the selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element during a bonus game, and wherein two of said reels comprises a video reel and wherein said processor is operable, for a first video reel, to move a selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element of the first video reel independent of player control

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and, for a second video reel, to move another second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element of the second video reel independent of player control to reveal a randomly determined outcome in a bonus game associated with a relative degree of movement between said second discrete symbol on said first video reel and said second discrete symbol on said second video reel, and to determine an award corresponding to said randomly determined outcome.

4.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the discrete symbols are superimposed over the graphical element.

5.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the graphical element includes a trail.

6.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 5, wherein the trail is selected from a group consisting of a road and a board game path.

7.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the reel is simulated on a video display.

8.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the reel is physical and driven by a stepper motor.

9.   (Currently Amended) A slot machine comprising:

a plurality of reels, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of discrete symbol positions and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions such that the discrete symbol positions are thematically unified by the graphical element, each of the reel strips also bearing a plurality of different first discrete

symbols, [[a]] said first discrete symbols being associated with said respective discrete symbol

positions; and

a processor <u>configured</u> ~~programmed~~ to award a base game payout responsive to an

alignment of one or more of the first discrete symbols associated with a winning combination

along a selected payline<u>,</u>

wherein at least one of said reels comprises a video reel and wherein said processor is

<u>further configured</u> ~~programmed to~~, for said at least one of said reels, <u>to</u> move a selected second

discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element <u>independent of player control</u>

during a bonus game <u>to represent, in association with a degree of movement of said selected</u>

<u>second discrete symbol and independent of any payline, a randomly determined outcome, and to</u>

<u>award</u> ~~an~~ <u>a bonus game</u> award <u>corresponding to said randomly determined outcome</u> ~~being related~~

~~to a degree of said movement and independent of any payline~~.

10.   (Previously Presented) The slot machine of claim 9, further including means for rotating

and stopping the reel and the discrete symbol to place a portion of the reel in visual association

with a display area.

11.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the discrete symbol is superimposed over

the graphical element.

12.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the graphical element includes a trail.

13.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 12, wherein the trail is selected from a group

consisting of a road and a board game path.

14.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the reel is simulated on a video display.

15.   (Original) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the reel is physical and driven by a stepper motor.

16.   (Cancelled).

17.   (Previously Presented) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the payout accumulates based on each discrete symbol position traversed by the discrete symbol.

18.   (Currently Amended) A method of conducting a slot game on a slot machine controlled by a processor, comprising:

receiving a wager from a player; and

rotating in a basic game a plurality of reels, at least one of the reels comprising a video reel, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of different first discrete symbols and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the first discrete symbols such that the first discrete symbols are thematically unified by the graphical element;

stopping the reels to place a portion of each reel in visual association with a display area;

providing a payout responsive to an alignment of a winning combination of first discrete symbols along a payline in said display area; and

conducting a bonus game responsive to a start-feature outcome in said basic game, said bonus game comprising the acts of:

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moving in said bonus game a selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element independent of player control to display a randomly determined outcome of said bonus game; and

providing an award related to a degree of said movement and being independent of any payline.

19.   (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the discrete symbols are superimposed over the graphical element.

20.   (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the graphical element includes a trail.

21.   (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the trail is selected from a group consisting of a road and a board game path.

22.   (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the reel is simulated on a video display.

23.   (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the reel is physical and driven by a stepper motor.

24.   (Original) The method of claim 18, further including determining a payout based, at least in part, on the portion of the reel associated with the display area.

25.   (Currently Amended) A method of conducting a slot game on a slot machine controlled by a processor, comprising:

receiving a wager from a player;

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rotating <u>in a basic game</u> a video reel, the video reel bearing a plurality of discrete symbol

positions and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of

the discrete symbol positions such that the discrete symbol positions are

thematically unified by the graphical element; <u>and</u>

<u>conducting a bonus game responsive to a start-feature outcome in said basic game, said</u>

<u>bonus game comprising the acts of</u>:

moving <u>in said bonus game</u> a discrete symbol between the adjacent ones

of the discrete symbol positions as the video reel is rotated <u>to display a randomly</u>

<u>determined outcome of said bonus game, said moving of said discrete symbol</u>

<u>being independent of player control</u>; and

determining a payout based on a degree of movement of the discrete

symbol between the adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions as the video

reel is rotated, said act of determining being independent of any selected pay line.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, further including stopping the reel to

place a portion of the video reel in visual association with a display area.

27.   (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the discrete symbol is superimposed over the

graphical element.

28.   (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the graphical element includes a trail.

29.   (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the trail is selected from a group consisting

of a road and a board game path.

30.   (Cancelled).

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, wherein the discrete symbol is moved at a first velocity relative to the continuous graphical element.

32.   (Cancelled).

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, wherein the payout accumulates based on each discrete symbol position traversed by the discrete symbol.

34.   (Cancelled).

35.   (Cancelled).

36.   (Cancelled).

37.   (Cancelled).

38.   (Previously Presented) The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the second discrete symbol is different than the first discrete symbols.

39.   (Previously Presented) The slot machine of claim 9, wherein the second discrete symbol is different than the first discrete symbols.

40.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the second discrete symbol is different than the first discrete symbols.